

Water makes many stops as it travels in a great circle called...

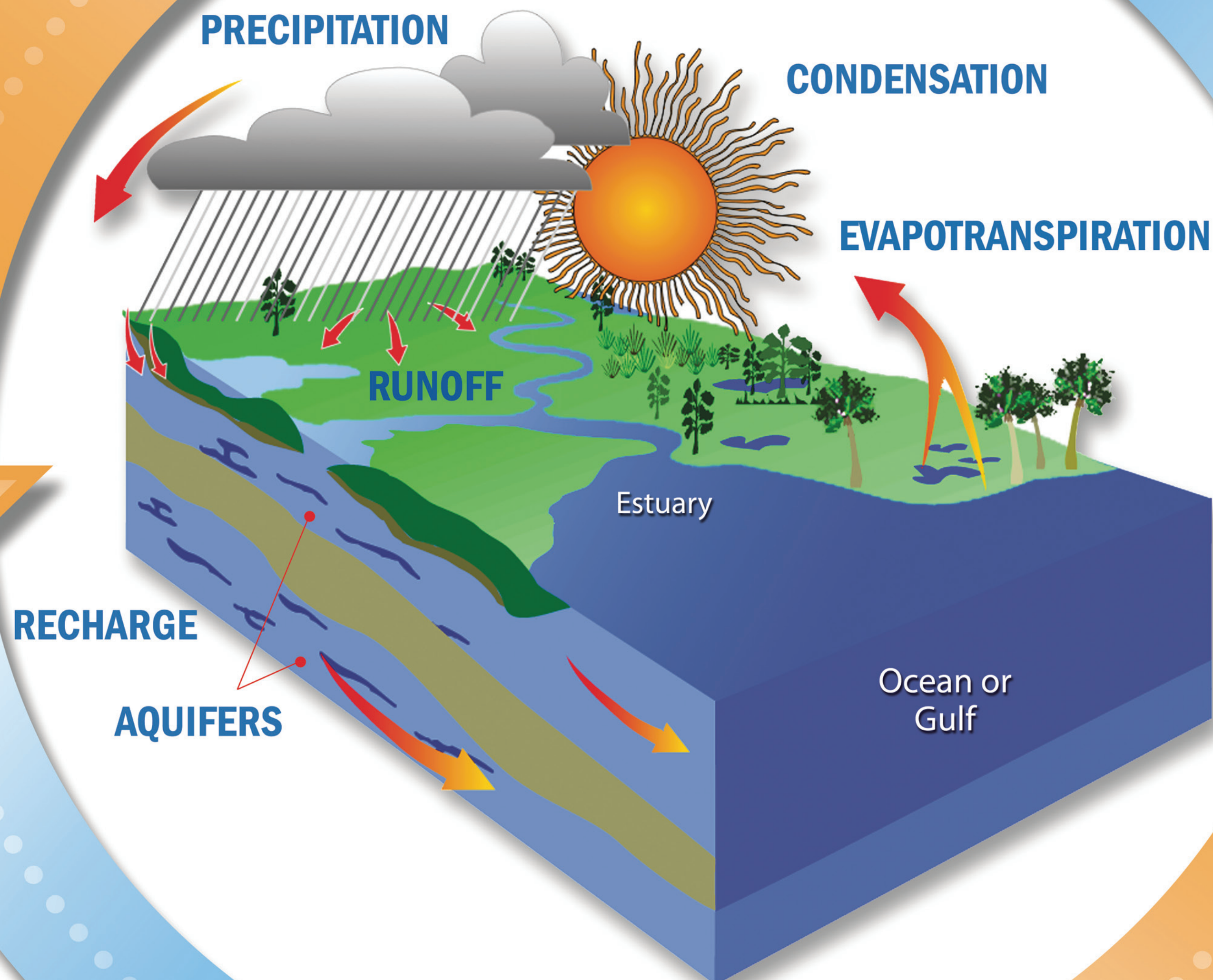
# THE WATER CYCLE



When water droplets in clouds become too heavy, precipitation falls to the ground and the **WATER CYCLE** begins again.

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**PRECIPITATION** falls from clouds to the earth as rain, snow or ice. An average of 52 inches of rain falls on South Florida each year. Excess water, called **RUNOFF**, flows from land into ponds, lakes or canals. In South Florida, the water also flows into wetlands, marshes or estuaries and into the Atlantic Ocean or Gulf of Mexico.



Some rainfall slowly seeps, or percolates, into the ground to **RECHARGE**, or refill, the underground layers of sand, gravel or rock. These layers, called **AQUIFERS**, hold water. In South Florida, wells are drilled into some aquifers to pump out water needed for people, businesses and farms. Water can also flow through aquifers to refill lakes and rivers and sometimes bubbles out of the ground as freshwater springs.

The sun heats up the earth's surface, causing water to turn to vapor as it evaporates. Plants release water through transpiration. Together, all the water rising into the air is called **EVAPOTRANSPIRATION**. The warm vapor continues to rise until it reaches cooler air, where it **CONDENSES** into very small droplets or ice crystals, forming clouds.

